



United States Department of Agriculture
Forest Service

Sweet-lone Integrated Resources Improvement Plan

Scenic Resource Report

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1.0 Introduction

Scenic quality is an important amenity in our lives. People's interests and expectations regarding ecosystems help establish desired aesthetic conditions for the varied landscapes. Scenery provides the setting for all activities experienced by forest visitors, and scenery is important for the Sweet-Ione Integrated Resources Improvement Plan project area viewed from two scenic travel corridors passing through the project area (Smackout Pass FR 1715, Meadow Road FR 1700 and numerous motorized recreation trails), and the North Pend Oreille Scenic Byway (WA SR 20), part of the International Selkirk Loop travelling through the north-south oriented Pend Oreille River Valley bottom on the east side outside of the project area. Each recreational setting is comprised of scenic attributes that are derived by the environmental context of topography, geology, and climate. These underlying factors are expressed and highlighted by the scenic attributes that they support. Scenery, just as any other resource, must be cared for and managed for future generations. The activities proposed by the Sweet-Ione Integrated Resource Improvement Plan potentially affect the current and future condition of these valued scenic resources. Managing scenery resources involves the process of analyzing effects, implementing scenic character goals and applying scenic conservation design features to achieve the Colville National Forest Land Management Plan 2019 (CNFP) desired conditions and direction for scenery resources.

2.0 Landscape Character

The Sweet-Ione Integrated Resource Improvement Plan project area lies within the diverse landscape of North-Eastern Washington in the Pend Oreille River Valley at the foothills of the Rocky Mountains. At the broad scale, the project area landscape variety ranges from the common landscape character type typical of the Okanogan Highlands with rolling to mountainous topography, abundant rivers, and vast mixed conifer forests to unique habitats located throughout the landscape. The Pend-Oreille River lies between in the valley between the Kettle Crest Mountain Range on its West and the Selkirk Mountains on the East with numerous small creek and streams feeding into the river, several small lakes are scattered around the landscape. In the lower western elevations as the project transitions to DNR, private and other land ownership and opens to the Ione valley, the landscape character transitions to the Pend Oreille River lined valley more characteristic of a rural landscape character type. Vegetation on the forest is classified into five vegetation types; Douglas-fir dry, Northern Rocky Mountain mixed conifer, western hemlock/western red cedar, subalpine fir/lodgepole pine, and spruce/subalpine fir.

2.1 Land Use Patterns

Local residents and recreation users value the scenery within the Sweet-Ione Integrated Resource Improvement Plan Project area. The landscape character and sense of place is reflective of "The Front Country Dispersed"; the landscape area is a roaded backyard and scenic backdrop to the local communities and is the portion of the forest most quickly reached from Spokane. People are drawn to this area for its diverse year-round dispersed recreation opportunities, natural settings, and scenic quality. The primary recreation activities occurring in the project area include summer and winter motorized trail use, fishing, dispersed camping scattered around the project area, hunting, foraging and driving for pleasure. There are no developed recreation sites or summer system trails in the project area, there are numerous designated groomed and non-groomed recreation trails, OHV use with open county roads and several open FS roads and motorized recreation trails

The Sweet-Ione project area is located on the west side of Pend Oreille River Valley and the North Pend Oreille Scenic Byway US 95 (part of the International Selkirk Loop) 1 mile west of Ione, Washington in the Big Muddy Creek and Sweet Creek Pend-Oreille River watersheds. Several road corridors travel through the project area. Meadow Forest Road 1700 and Smackout Pass Forest Road 1715 provide

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secondary egress from the community of Ione, one of which is usually plowed throughout winter. The landscape character is predominately a naturally appearing to slightly altered forested environment viewed in the foreground/middleground zone of the Meadow Creek and Smackout Pass viewsheds. The landscape is primarily viewed as a foreground/middleground backdrop setting for the community of Ione and the North Pend Oreille Scenic Byway US 95 (part of the International Selkirk Loop). Along the eastern edge of the project boundary from Linton Mountain to Diamond Creek and Hanks Butte area, portions of NFS Lands are adjacent to private lands including homes and other developments along the wildland-rural interface.

This analysis describes the existing condition of the scenic resources within the project area and discloses the potential effects of the proposed activities of alternatives on scenic resources as related to prescribed Scenic Integrity Objectives (SIO's).

2.2 Existing Scenic Integrity

Every landscape changes over time, in turn, the landscape vegetative character continues to change whether it is actively managed or allowed to naturally evolve. In the Sweet-Ione Project area, there has been a change in historic vegetative species and vegetative patterns as described in the Silviculture and Fuels Resource Report (December, 2019). Vegetation patterns have changed from historic composition and pattern by human settlement (homesteading land clearing), which often altered historic fire regime patterns, fire suppression, timber harvest, mining, and grazing over the last one hundred years. In a majority of the area, the resulting patterns are becoming less sustainable in the long term due to high risk of future fire potential and existing insect or disease outbreaks that contribute to trees dying and a degraded forested setting environment in the project area. There is a higher risk of wildfire in the rural interface as described in the fire and fuels behavior narrative. The species of vegetation and spatial distribution of plant communities that have been affected by or resulted from fire suppression activities are evident to visitors; however, they are not widely understood to be the result of human intervention in the fire regimes. These effects (different vegetation communities and understory vegetation) are relatively subtle from a visual standpoint and not strongly linked with the more common perception regarding fire, such as black and silver snags, brown needles and black charred trunks. For purpose of scenic analysis, subsequent references to the “effects of fire” refer to the obvious visual evidence that occurs as a direct result of fire rather than the subtle effects of different species of vegetation and spatial distribution of plant communities that are often in advanced succession. The shift from fire-resistance species being dominant (ponderosa pine and western larch) to a substantial increase and co-dominance of fire-intolerant species, primarily western redcedar and grand-fir. The warmdry stands now have a relatively dense mid and understory component of grand fir, Douglas-fir and western red cedar.

Scenic integrity is the amount of human caused deviation in form, line, color, and texture of a landscape. Scenic integrity serves as a frame of reference for measuring scenic integrity levels based on the valued attributes of the existing landscape character being viewed. The degrees of integrity vary from VERY HIGH to VERY LOW to UNACCEPTABLY LOW. Scenic Integrity is measured on the Colville National Forest through Scenic integrity Objective levels defined by the *USFS Scenery Management System, Landscape Aesthetics, A Handbook for Scenery Management, Handbook 701*. Table 1 displays the 6 scenic integrity levels and conditions associated with each level and how people perceive them.

Table 1. Scenic Integrity Objective Definition

Scenic Integrity Objective (SIO)	Definition
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Scenic Integrity Objective (SIO)	Definition
VERY HIGH	Unaltered. Landscape is intact with only minor changes from the valued landscape character associated with significant scenic landscapes. This SIO is typically (but not exclusively) associated with specially designated areas such as wilderness or other designations that imply the landscape is natural-appearing and only ecological changes occur
HIGH	Appears Unaltered. Management activities are unnoticed and the landscape character <i>appears</i> unaltered.
MODERATE	Slightly Altered. Management activities are noticeable but are subordinate to the landscape character. The landscape appears slightly altered.
LOW	Moderately Altered. Management activities are evident and sometimes dominate the landscape character but are designed to blend with surroundings by repeating line, form, color, texture of landscape character attributes. The landscape appears altered.
VERY LOW	Heavily Altered. Management activities create a “heavily altered landscape.” Changes may strongly dominate the landscape.
UNACCEPTABLY LOW	Unacceptable Modification. Management activities create an extremely altered landscape. Deviations are extremely dominant and borrow little if any form, line, color, texture, pattern or scale from the landscape character. Landscapes at this level of integrity need rehabilitation.

The existing scenic integrity of the Sweet-Ione Project area has a range of scenic integrity levels (conditions) from HIGH to MODERATE to LOW, naturally appearing to slightly altered to moderately altered based on vegetative characteristics. Within the project area there are evidences of past activities. Partial removal treatments can be seen where stumps are apparent. Along with the evidence of treatments are the indirect effects of additional variety in color and texture as deciduous shrubs and larch species have grown. The scenic integrity levels meet the Forest Plan for a natural appearing to slightly altered foreground and middleground from the designated travel routes and viewsheds.

2.3 Existing Scenic Stability

A new scenery indicator has been developed for use within the USFS Scenery Management System (applied in this analysis according to procedures described in the 9/20/06 Draft Appendix J of the SMS Handbook #701). Scenic stability is the degree to which the desired scenic character can be sustained through time and ecological progression. For the Sweet-Ione Project area, the existing scenic stability analysis focuses on the single major scenery attribute of vegetation, addressing its ecosystem conditions identified by field observation and Fire Regime Condition Class (FRCC) coarse-scale data on vegetation and fire history data. Ecosystem changes to other minor scenery attributes such as landform, rock outcrops, and winter snowfall are not as critical to the Sweet-Ione area’s scenic character as its vegetation, since these changes are relatively stable over time regardless of fire behavior and human activities.

Evaluating scenic stability is done by considering conditions necessary to sustain desired scenic character of stands within the natural and historic range of the landscape. Appropriate stand density, species composition, and fuel loads are necessary for stands to maintain the inherent characteristics through their lifecycle. When trends such as increasing stand density, encroachment of less resilient species, increasing fuel loads, and high levels of mortality exist, the expected consequences are change in the scenic character that are beyond the historic scale. Examples of these consequences are large canopy openings from intense wildfires, large stands of dead and dying timber, and loss of distinctive characteristic such as

open, large tree character pine stands and multi-layered mixed species stands. Gradual trends over time have altered the species composition, stand structure, and age classes of the forest vegetation. A dense understory of shade tolerant Douglas-fir, western red cedar, subalpine fir and grand fir have grown over and created ladder fuels that are not characteristic of the Rocky Mountain region landscape character type.

Scenic stability levels are defined as follows:

Very High Stability—All dominant and minor scenery attributes of the valued scenic character are present and are likely to be sustained.

High Stability—All dominant scenery attributes of the valued scenic character are present and are likely to be sustained. However, there may be scenery attribute conditions and ecosystem stressors that present a low risk to the sustainability of the dominant scenery attributes.

Moderate Stability—Most dominant scenery attributes of the valued scenic character are present and are likely to be sustained. A few may have been lost or are in serious decline.

Low Stability—Some dominant scenery attributes of the valued scenic character are present and are likely to be sustained. Known scenery attribute conditions and ecosystem stressors may seriously threaten or have already eliminated the others.

Very Low Stability—Most dominant scenery attributes of the valued scenic character are seriously threatened or absent due to their conditions and ecosystem stressors and are not likely to be sustained. The few that remain may be moderately threatened but are likely to be sustained.

No Stability—All dominant scenery attributes of the valued scenic character are absent or seriously threatened by their conditions and ecosystem stressors. None are likely to be sustained, except relatively permanent attributes such as landforms.

2.4 Fire Regime/Condition Class (FRCC)

The greatest hazard to scenery resources in this area are large stand replacement fires that would burn much more intensely due to the stocking levels, species compositions, ladder fuels and canopy closure that have developed over time, and epidemics of insect or disease that may be out of scale. The fire regime condition classes rate these factors and give an indication of the potential for fire intensity. A natural fire regime is a general classification of the role fire would play across a landscape in the absence of modern human intervention but including the possible influence of aboriginal fire use. Five fire regime groups have been defined, ranging from high frequency-low severity regimes to low frequency-high severity regimes.

FRCC is used to describe the degree of departure from the historic fire regimes that results from alterations of key ecosystem components such as composition, structure stage, stand age, and canopy closure. (Agee 1993, Brown 1995). One or more of the following activities may have caused this departure: fire exclusion, high-grade timber harvesting, grazing, introduction and establishment of non-native plant species, insects or disease (introduced or native), or other past management activities. (FRCC Guidebook 2010). Three condition classes have been developed to categorize the current condition with respect to each of the five historic fire regime groups. Current conditions are a function of the degree of departure from historical fire regimes resulting from alterations of key ecosystem components such as; species composition, vegetation structural stage, stand age, and canopy closure. The higher the condition class number the higher the relative risk of fire, insect, or disease caused losses to natural resources and other key ecosystem components. A higher condition class rating or percent from departure shows a higher risk of loss to key ecosystem components landscape wide.

The three fire regime condition classes are:

Condition Class 1: Fire regimes are within or near historical ranges, and the risk of losing key ecosystem components is low. Fire frequencies have departed from historical frequencies (either increased or decreased) by no more than one return interval. Vegetation attributes (species composition and structure) are intact and functioning within their historical range. **A small amount of FRCC 1 exists in the analysis area. (~1%)**

Condition Class 2: Fire regimes have been moderately altered from their historical range. The risk of losing key ecosystem components is moderate. Fire frequencies have departed from historical frequencies by more than one return interval resulting in moderate changes to one or more of the following: fire size, frequency, intensity, severity, or landscape pattern. Vegetation attributes have been moderately altered from their historical ranges. **The majority of the analysis area is considered to be in Class 2. (~98%)**

Condition Class 3: Fire regimes have significantly altered from their historical range. The risk of losing key ecosystem components is high. Fire frequencies have departed by multiple return intervals resulting in dramatic changes to one or more of the following: fire size, frequency, intensity, severity, or landscape pattern. **A small amount of FRCC class 3 exists in the analysis area. (~1%)**

2.4.1 Fire Regime/Condition Class (FRCC) and Existing Scenic Stability

The **FRCC 1 (Low)** corresponds to the definitions for **“High” and “Very High” Scenic Stability** levels described above. Both classifications have scenery attribute conditions that are within the range of natural or historic variability.

FRCC 2 (Moderate) corresponds to the definitions for **“Moderate and Low” Scenic Stability**. Both classifications include conditions outside the range of natural or historic variability.

FRCC 3 (High) corresponds to the definitions for **“Very Low” and “No” Scenic Stability**. They are far beyond the range of natural or historic variability.

Ninety eight percent of the Sweet-Ione project area is dominated by the FRCC 2 (Moderate), almost the entire landscape area, which is rated moderate to low scenic stability on a landscape scale, moderately divergent from historical conditions. The majority of the project area under current stand conditions has high fuel loadings and densely stocked canopies when compared to historical loadings for the fire regime that it occurs in.

These two factors create a *moderate to low scenic stability* for the project area.

3.0 Regulatory Framework

The Colville National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Hereafter, the Forest Plan) provides management direction for scenery through plan components, valued landscape character descriptions, scenic viewshed tables and the scenic integrity (SIO) map in appendix D. The SIO map prescribes the range of SIO's for all landscape areas (acres). The Forest Plan divides the Sweet-Ione Integrated Resources Improvement Project into different Management Areas (MAs), each having particular objectives, management direction and a desired future condition for large areas of the Forest. The management direction for scenery, using scenic integrity objectives in the form of standards and guidelines, both Forest wide and MA-specific, apply to all proposed activities within the analysis area. SIO zones overlay the management areas and direction for scenery management applies to all management areas. Applicability of plan direction is guided by the principle that where there is an overlap of scenery management direction with other plan components, the most restrictive plan direction applies. Table 2 displays the management direction for scenery forest wide standards and guidelines and management areas.

3.1 Colville Scenery Forest Wide Standards and Guidelines

Table 2. Colville Forest-Wide Standards and Guidelines

Scenery	Colville Forest-Wide Plan Standards and Guidelines
<i>FW-STD-SCE-01. Maintain and Enhance Scenery</i>	New structures will be designed to meet prescribed SIOs. Efforts will be made to rehabilitate existing structures that do not currently meet SIOs.
<i>FW-GDL-SCE-01. Scenic Integrity Levels</i>	<p>Project-level activities should be planned and designed to meet the established desired SIOs assigned to the management area (see appendix D).</p> <p>Short-term deviations (3 to 6 years) to the existing scenic integrity of an area should be limited to the immediate surroundings of the stand, recreation attraction, or feature of concern. Rehabilitation actions may be taken when scenic integrity is compromised by atypical disturbances, such as uncharacteristic wildfires, insect or disease outbreaks, or floods. Treatments should not diminish the scenic quality more than the anticipated disturbance would have. Enhancement actions may be taken to increase positive scenic attributes in the viewshed, such as exposing large tree boles or geologic features for viewing.</p> <p>In landscape areas where an ecosystem is out of the historical range of variability, the forest setting may exist at a lower scenic integrity during treatment activity and recovery to restore and sustain the landscape character to the assigned SIO. No more than one-third of project landscape area would be lowered by one scenic integrity level in sensitive scenic viewsheds where the SIO is high or moderate to avoid having too much landscape being altered in a short time frame and to minimize visual effects. Treatments would be implemented in phases over a longer (5 to 15 years or longer) time period if multiple treatments are needed to achieve the desired results. Up to 30 percent of a project area may be lowered from prescribed SIO by one level in a staged time frame (first treatment in 5 years, second treatment 5 to 10 years, third treatment 10 to 15 years, life of plan) depending on scenic concern sensitivity level, viewshed seen area, and scope of project.</p>
<i>FW-GDL-SCE-03.</i>	<p>Management Activities in Scenic Viewsheds</p> <p>Management activities will be designed and implemented to achieve, at minimum, the level of scenic integrity assigned to the landscape area.</p> <p>(See appendix D for SIO map and Scenic Viewshed Table)</p>
<i>FW-GDL-SCE-04. Rehabilitation of Scenic Viewsheds</i>	<p>Rehabilitate existing project areas and other areas that do not meet scenic integrity objectives. See appendix D for definitions of scenic integrity objectives/levels. Set priorities for rehabilitation considering the following;</p> <p>Relative importance of the area and amount of deviation from the scenic integrity objectives.</p> <p>Foreground of high public use areas has highest priority.</p> <p>Length of time it will take natural processes to reduce the visual impacts so that they meet the prescribed scenic integrity objectives.</p> <p>Length of time it will take rehabilitation measures to meet the prescribed scenic integrity objectives.</p> <p>Benefits to other resource management objectives to accomplish rehabilitation.</p>
<i>FW-GDL-SCE-05. Vegetation Management</i>	Plan, design, and locate vegetation manipulation on a scale that retains the color and texture of the landscape character, borrowing directional emphasis of form and line from natural features.
Scenic Byways	Colville Forest-Wide Plan Standards and Guidelines
<i>MA-STD-SB-01. Scenic Integrity Objectives</i>	Vegetation Management practices and all project-level activities will be planned and designed to meet the high scenic integrity objectives (see appendix D).
<i>MA-GDL-SB-01.</i>	The desired landscape character of the area should be retained or enhanced using

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Scenery	Colville Forest-Wide Plan Standards and Guidelines
<i>Vegetation Management</i>	appropriate vegetation treatments including mechanical harvest. Opportunities to increase pollinator habitat along roadways with native plant materials are considered.
<i>MA-GDL-SB-02. Visual Impacts</i>	Visual impacts from vegetation treatments, recreation uses, rangeland developments, and other structures should blend with the overall landscape character along scenic byways.

3.1.1 Management Areas applicable to Scenery

The proposed project encompasses portions of management areas listed below with descriptions, acres and prescribed SIO's.

Table 3. Management Areas and prescribed Scenic Integrity Objectives

Management Area	Description	% of NFS acres by MA in Project Area	Scenic Integrity Objective (SIO) Very High High Moderate Low
Backcountry (BC)	Emphasize summer and winter non-motorized recreation. The landscape is natural-appearing. It contributes to the variety of native plant communities and the structure as defined in desired conditions for vegetation, aquatic, and wildlife habitats. The desired conditions for vegetation are achieved through a combination of ecological processes and management activities. While the landscape is predominantly natural-appearing, a few locations have a vegetation structure that is altered to contribute to the recreational setting such as openings created and retained for scenic views.	1,530 acres 7.5% of project area	High SIO
Focused Restoration (FR)	Emphasize ecological integrity and ecosystem function restoration at the landscape scale The landscape contributes to the variety of native plant communities and the composition, structure, and patterns as defined in desired conditions for vegetative systems, aquatic, plant, and wildlife habitats. The desired conditions for vegetation are achieved through a combination of ecological processes and management activities. While the landscape is predominantly natural-appearing, there are some locations where the vegetation composition, structure, or pattern is slightly or moderately altered.	5,825 acres 31% of project area	Low SIO Moderate SIO High SIO
General Restoration (GR)	Spatially, this area includes all areas not included in another management area. The landscape is predominantly natural-appearing to slightly altered to moderately altered, and contributes to the variety of native plant communities and the composition, structure, and patterns as defined in desired conditions for vegetative systems, aquatic, plant, and wildlife habitats. The desired conditions for vegetation are achieved through a combination of ecological processes and management activities. While the landscape is natural-appearing, there are locations that have a vegetation composition, structure, or pattern that is altered to provide a recreational setting such as openings maintained for	11,350 acres 60% of project area	Low SIO Moderate SIO High SIO

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Management Area	Description	% of NFS acres by MA in Project Area	Scenic Integrity Objective (SIO) Very High High Moderate Low
	scenic views; or other desired conditions, such as vegetation fuel conditions adjacent to an urban interface.		
Scenic Byways (SB)	View sheds are managed to protect scenic values and recreation use.	165 acres 0.8% acres	High SIO
Wilderness Recommended (WR)	Lands suited for recommendation for addition to the national wilderness preservation system. The wilderness characteristics (untrammelled, undeveloped, natural, opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation) of each recommended wilderness should remain intact until a congressional decision on wilderness designation is made.	155 acres 0.7% acres	Very High SIO
	Total Forest Service Ownership	19,025 acres	
	Total Department of Natural Resources Ownership	455 acres	NA
	Total Private – Other Ownership	1,130 acres	NA
	Total Project Area	20,610	

3.1.2 Landscape Scenic Viewsheds and SIO's, Landscape Visibility and Concern Levels

The Colville Forest Plan provides management direction for scenery through plan components, valued landscape character descriptions, scenic viewshed tables and the scenic integrity (SIO) map in appendix D. Scenic Integrity Objectives (SIO's) provide the degree of acceptable alteration of the characteristic landscape and are also a measure of the degree to which a landscape is visually perceived to be complete.

The following map displays the Scenic Integrity Objectives for the Sweet Ione project area.

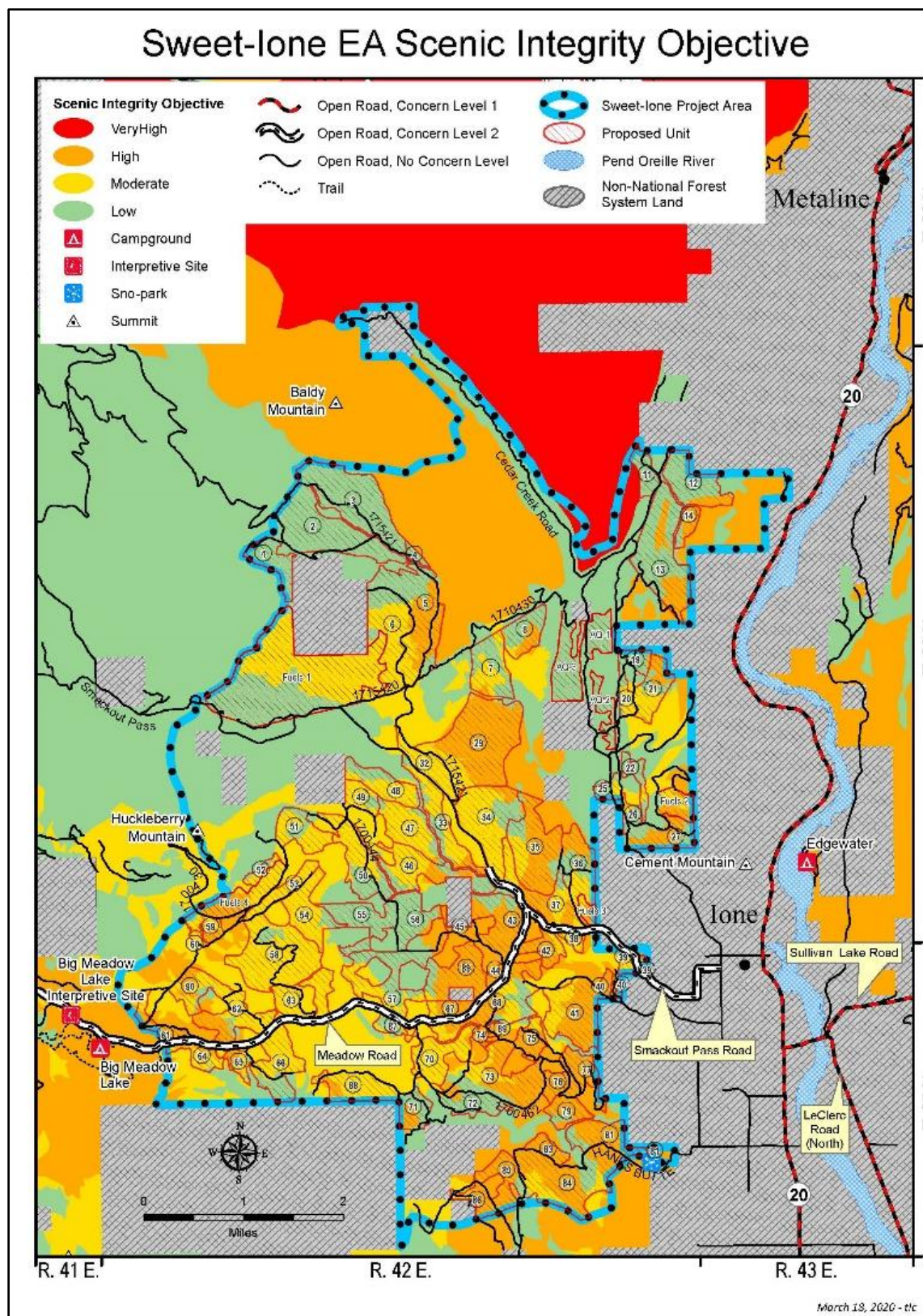


Figure 1. Colville Forest Plan Scenic Integrity Objective Map

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Travel corridors whose users are sensitive to changes in scenery were identified as concern level 1 or concern level 2 scenic viewsheds in the Forest Plan (Appendix D). The scenic effects analysis will consider how each alternative meets the scenic integrity objectives from the identified concern level 2 travel routes of Meadow Creek FR 1700 and Smackout Pass FR 1715 within the project area boundary and the backdrop landscape setting viewed from North Pend Oreille Scenic Byway US 95 (part of the International Selkirk Loop) viewshed east of the project area travelling south-north through the valley bottom. There are no developed recreation sites in the project area.

Landscape visibility describes the portions of landscapes visible from travel ways and use areas important to constituents for their scenic quality, aesthetic values, and landscape merits. Travel ways and use areas have identified concern levels for viewing scenery. Concern level 1, the highest concern for scenery, is prescribed to travel ways or use areas that often lead to distinctive scenic features, residential areas, resorts, recreation areas, etc. Concern level 1 travel routes attract a higher percentage of users having high concern for scenic quality, therefore increasing the importance of those travel ways for viewing natural-appearing scenery (USDA FS 1995, 4–8) and most often have a High Scenic Integrity Objective to the foreground and middleground distance zone. Concern level 1 applies to the International Selkirk Loop and North Pend Oreille Scenic Byway viewshed. In Concern level 2 travel routes users have a moderate concern for scenery, the secondary travel routes provide access to the forest with more of a local big backyard for dispersed recreation or travel through the area to other destinations such as Big Meadow Lake CG. Users have a high to moderate concern for scenic quality and most often the travel routes are prescribed Moderate Scenic Integrity Objective to the foreground/middleground distance zone. Concern level 2 applies to Meadow Creek FR 1700 and Smackout Pass FR 1715.

Foreground is based on landscape visibility and is defined as views up to ½ mile distance zone, immediate foreground is viewed up to 300', the middleground is ½ mile to 4 miles distance zone and background is 4 miles to the horizon from the travel way and use areas (Figure 2).

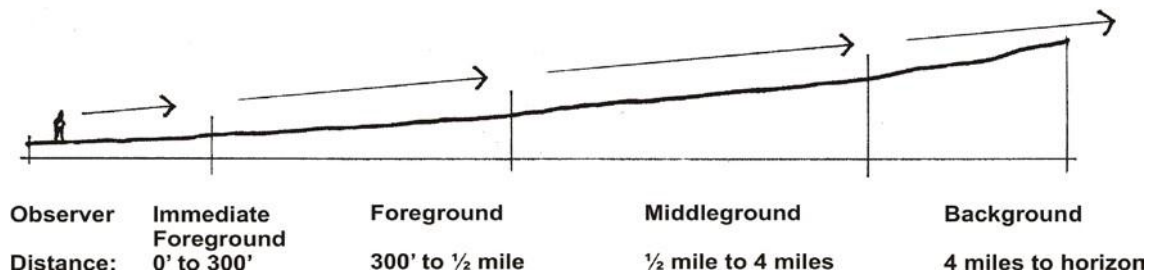


Figure 2. Landscape Distance Zones (USDA FS 1995, 4-5)

The landscape visibility map modeled an observation points from Ione and shows seen area from the specific observation point. **An important consideration is the seen area maps are based on landform only; a crucial element is that existing vegetation would provide screening in certain areas of proposed management activities, primarily in the foreground which is not factored into the seen area modeling.** In general, where the landform is steeper the landscape becomes more highly visible (generally >60%). Views from flatter landscapes are more limited where existing vegetation narrows the depth of viewing (generally <35%), except for open areas such as meadows, lakes, or old stands that were clearcut in the past.

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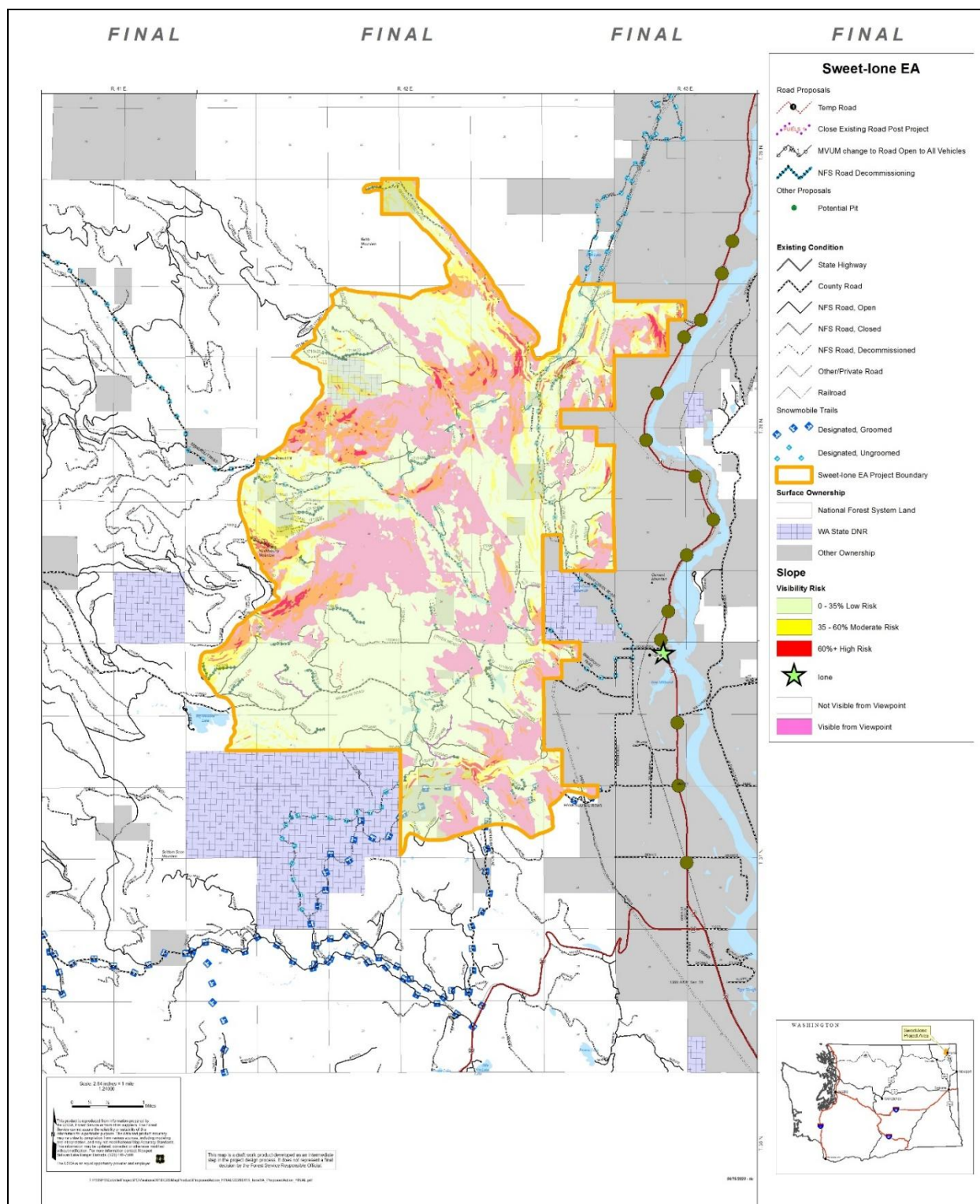


Figure 3 . Potential Seen Area from Ione

3.1.3 Scenic Byways

The North Pend Oreille Scenic Byway (WA SR 20), part of the International Selkirk Loop travelling through the north-south oriented Pend Oreille River Valley bottom on the east side outside of the project area attracts tourism. Scenic Byways exhibit natural-appearing landscapes where human activities do not stand out in the foreground, up to one-half mile (high SIO). The viewshed is managed to protect the scenic values.

3.1.4 Desired Condition

Meet Forest Plan direction to create a range of forest structural stages that provides resilience and is compatible with characteristic disturbance processes such as wildland fire, insects and diseases, as well as aquatic and terrestrial habitat conditions and their associated species (Forest Plan 2019 page 34). The desired condition for scenery is to retain or enhance existing landscape character settings which contributes to the quality of life of people who live and recreate with National Forest System lands as their backdrop. The Forest Plan defines Scenic Integrity Objectives (SIOs) to meet the desired conditions. Landscape character of the region is to be maintained and views and viewpoints are to be highlighted and preserved.

FW-DC-SCE-01. Maintain and Enhance Scenery: The scenery of the Forest enhances the experience of visitors and contributes to the quality of life of communities whose backdrop is National Forest System lands. The valued landscape character is maintained and enhanced and SIOs are met.

Opportunities exist to view high-quality scenery that represents the natural landscape character of the region and / or landscapes with unusual features. Vegetation management contributes to seasonal color and texture, age classes, and a variety of plant communities and maintains long-term vigor and health of the vegetation. Enhancement opportunities exist to increase positive scenic attributes where few currently exist, such as highlighting large tree boles or opening views to geologic features, meadows and distant viewpoints along Smackout Pass FR 1715 and Meadow Road FR 1700.

MA-DC-SB-01. Landscape and Developments: Scenic Byway Management Areas provide opportunities to view high-quality scenery, historical, and natural features. Viewsheds along scenic byways provide natural-appearing landscapes and enhance recreational tourists that supports local communities.

Scenic Byways exhibit natural-appearing landscapes where human activities do not stand out in the foreground, up to one-half mile (high scenic integrity).

From a scenery enhancement and rehabilitation approach, ecologically sound landscapes can also be aesthetically pleasing as well as sustainable, being reflective of the inherent natural disturbance regimes that are in scale to the appropriate vegetative type, and the natural role of fire, insects and/or disease cycles. When the amount of disturbance exceeds the natural ecosystem parameters, the risk of unnatural catastrophic level disturbances increases and can cause a dramatic change to the existing scenery and landscape character. Ecological sustainability provides a variety of benefits that contribute to community stability and the quality of life in nearby communities and the larger population such as clean water, forest products, recreational opportunities, aesthetics, cultural uses and habitat for biodiversity in the forest. Vegetation conditions support the long term sustainability of these benefits to people by reducing the risk of undesirable fire effects, disease and mortality, which may interrupt or eliminate forest benefits.

3.2 Federal Law

The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) states that it is the “continuing responsibility of the Federal Government to use all practicable means to assure for all Americans, aesthetically and culturally pleasing surroundings.” NEPA also requires “A systematic and interdisciplinary approach which would insure the integrated use of the natural and social sciences and the environmental design arts

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into planning and decision-making which may have an impact on man's environment." To accomplish this, numerous Federal laws require all Federal land management agencies to consider scenery and aesthetic resources in land management planning, resource planning, project design, implementation, and monitoring. These Federal laws include the following:

- The Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act of 1960 (16 U.S.C. 528 (note) – authorizes and directs the Secretary of Agriculture “to develop and administer the renewable surface resources of the National Forests” with “harmonious and coordinated management of the various resources . . . with consideration being given to the relative values of the various resources, and not necessarily the combination of uses that will give the greatest dollar return or the greatest unit output.”
- The National Forest Management Act (1976) – This act provides direction that the preservation of aesthetic values is analyzed at all planning levels. Part 219.21 requires that the visual resource shall be inventoried and evaluated as an integrated part of evaluating alternatives in the forest planning process, addressing both the landscape's visual attractiveness and the public's visual expectation.
- The Environmental Quality Act (1970) – This act sets forth a national policy for the environment which provides for the enhancement of environmental quality.
- The Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act (1974) – This act provides direction to conduct aesthetic analysis and assess the impacts on aesthetics for timber harvesting. It also provides the framework for natural resource conservation.
- The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (1968) – The outstandingly remarkable scenic values of rivers eligible or suitable to be included in the system must be carefully managed. Any management activities that could negatively impact the scenic resources, where they are an identified outstandingly remarkable value, should not be conducted or mitigated according the river's comprehensive management plan.

3.2.1 Executive Orders

- Invasive Species, EO 13112 of February 3, 1999
- Migratory Birds, EO 12962 of January 10, 2001
- Environmental Justice, EO 12898 of February 11, 1994

3.3 State and Local Law

Does not apply for Scenery

3.4 Other Guidance or Recommendations

The Colville Forest Plan (2019) was updated using The Scenery Management System (SMS), a dynamic framework for scenery management. The framework describes scenery as a dynamic evolving concept and is integrated into ecosystem management. Ecosystems provide the environmental context for this scenery management system. This method of scenery management, called Landscape Aesthetics, was adopted by the FS and is described in detail in *Forest Service Landscape Aesthetics, A Handbook for Scenery Management*, 1995. This includes scenery sustainability concepts described in SMS Handbook Appendix J. It relies on field studies and photographs from inventoried sensitive viewpoints and other views of the project area, as well as coordination with project interdisciplinary team (ID Team) members, and consideration of public preferences for scenic quality. Integration of this scenery analysis into project planning ensures that the Sweet-Ione Project is consistent with scenery-related Colville National Forest

direction, USFS policies, and applicable elements of the USFS Visual Management and Scenery Management systems. Several USDA Landscape Management handbooks have been developed to establish a framework for management of visual resources. These handbooks and Forest Service manual guidance are discussed in the Management Guidance Section following the Information Sources and Methodology used for Analysis.

Appendix B of the Scenery Management System Handbook #701 provides a complete list of references requiring Forest Service management of scenery and aesthetics.

4.0 Analysis Framework

4.1 Issues

No significant effects from a scenery perspective, does not affect public health or safety, and does not affect unique characteristic of the geographic area such as proximity to historical or cultural resources, parklands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.

4.2 Other Resource Concerns

“Research has shown that high-quality scenery especially that related to natural-appearing forests enhances people’s lives and benefits society. Research findings support the logic that scenic quality and naturalness of the landscape directly enhance human well-being, both physically and psychologically, and contribute to other important human benefits. Specifically these benefits include people’s improved physiological well-being as an important by-product of viewing interesting and pleasant natural appearing landscapes with high scenic diversity.” (USDA FS 1995, 17).

Visitor use, participation and satisfaction are measured by the National Visitor Use Monitoring (NVUM) system. Across the forest, main recreation activities include viewing natural features or scenery, relaxing, hiking and walking, driving for pleasure, and viewing wildlife (USDA FS 2012). Although actual numbers are not available at the project area scale, the Sweet-Ione Project area likely attracts a moderate number of recreationists due to the year round recreation dispersed opportunities and the main travel corridors of Smackout Pass FR 1715, Meadow Road FR 1700. There are no developed recreation sites or summer system trails in the project area, the main use is dispersed recreation opportunities including camping scattered around the project area, there are numerous designated groomed and non-groomed recreation trails, OHV use with open county roads and several open FS roads and motorized recreation trails. The North Pend Oreille Scenic Byway (WA SR 20), part of the International Selkirk Loop travelling through the north-south oriented Pend Oreille River Valley bottom on the east side outside of the project area attracts tourism. National Visitor Use Monitoring also indicates that natural and naturally appearing scenery is an important resource for the Forest’s recreation visitors.

4.3 Resource Indicators and Measures

The indicators used to measure the effects to scenery resources are landscape character, scenic integrity and the resulting Scenic Integrity Objective (SIO). These indicators evaluate the intensity and duration of effects as well as the degree to which the alternatives would affect the stability of scenery attributes over the long term. Landscape character is the naturally established landscape pattern in a geographic area that makes each landscape identifiable or unique. It includes both the visual and cultural values and consists of the combination of physical, biological and cultural attributes that are valued by constituents. (SMS Handbook). Scenic integrity is the degree to which the scenery is free from visible disturbances that detract from the natural and socially valued appearance, including disturbances due to human activities or extreme natural events inconsistent with the historic range of variability (SMS Handbook).

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- 1) **Scenic Integrity Objectives, Landscape Visibility and Sensitivity Levels;** Consistency with Colville Forest Plan standards and guidelines and the resulting scenic integrity level in the short-term and long-term based on how well the following activities meet the prescribed Low to Moderate to High Scenic Integrity Objectives.
 - a) the vegetation treatments within mid-closed structures that are out of their historic range of variability (HRV),
 - b) managing and treating priority landscape areas that are out of their natural fire regime class and trending towards higher amounts of departure,
 - c) treatments to improve aquatic and riparian habitat restoration,
 - d) road management to provide needed access to manage the landscape provide public access and reduce natural resource
- 2) **Scenic Byways Management Areas.** Does the alternative protect, maintain or enhance the outstandingly remarkable recreation and scenic values of the International Selkirk Loop which overlaps with the North Pend Oreille Scenic Byway viewshed?

Table 4. Resource Indicators and Measures for Assessing Scenic Effects

Resource Element	Resource Indicator Used to address: P/N, or key issue?	Measure (Quantify if possible) Foreground (1/2 mile distance zone) Middleground (1/2 mile up to 4 miles)	Source (LRMP S/G; law or policy, BMPs, etc.)?
Scenic Integrity Objectives, Landscape Visibility and Concern Levels	Does the alternative meet the scenic integrity objectives assigned by the Forest Plan? Not used for P/N or key issue	Amount of changes seen on the landscape, including changes affected by the shape, size and arrangement and location of commercial and non-commercial vegetation treatment and harvest methods, hazardous fuels treatment and methods, aquatic and riparian habitat restoration methods and road management activities in concern level 2 travel routes, Meadow Creek FR 1700 and Smackout Pass FR 1715	FW-DC-SCE-01 FW-STD-SCE-01 FW-GDL-SCE-01 FW-GDL-SCE-03 FW-GDL-SCE-05 MA-DC-SB-01 SIO's of management areas: General Restoration Focused Restoration Scenic Byways Concern level 1 and 2 travel routes; Forest Plan Appendix D
Scenic Byways	Does the alternative protect, maintain or enhance the scenery outstandingly remarkable Recreation and scenic values of the International Selkirk Loop and North Pend Oreille Scenic Byway viewshed? Not used for P/N or	Amount of changes seen on the landscape, including changes affected by the shape, size and arrangement of location of treatment units within International Selkirk Loop and North Pend Oreille Scenic Byway viewshed, 1/2 mile on each side. The travel corridor is east of the project area travelling south-north through the valley bottom.	FW-DC-SCE-01 FW-STD-SCE-01 FW-GDL-SCE-01 FW-GDL-SCE-03 FW-GDL-SCE-05 MA-DC-SB-01 SIO's of management areas: General Restoration Focused Restoration Scenic Byways Concern level 1 and 2

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Resource Element	Resource Indicator Used to address: P/N, or key issue?	Measure (Quantify if possible) Foreground (1/2 mile distance zone) Middleground (1/2 mile up to 4 miles)	Source (LRMP S/G; law or policy, BMPs, etc.)?
	key issue		travel routes; Forest Plan Appendix D

5.0 Methodology

The scenic quality of the area was analyzed in the context of the management direction, desired condition, and objectives of the *Colville National Forest Land Management Plan September 2019*, as amended. The goal of landscape management on all National Forest System Lands (NFSL) is to manage for the highest possible scenic quality, commensurate with other appropriate public uses, costs, and benefits.

The scenery effects analyses used for this report are in the Scenery Management Handbook (SMHB) #701, 2007. Scenery management is based on the classic aesthetic factors of form, line, color and texture, as well as the principles of sense of place. “Scenic integrity measures the amount of natural or socially valued appearance in a landscape along with the amount of scenic disturbance that contrasts with and detracts from the appearance (the valued scenic character) existing at the time of measurement.” “Scenic stability is an indicator of the ecological sustainability of the scenic character’s valued attributes.” (App J Scenery Management, SMHB, 2007).

ArcMap and GIS data layers were used to analyze the proposed activities in regards to recreation use, scenic concern travel corridor locations, potential seen areas from concern level 2 travel corridors and the International Selkirk Loop/North Pend Oreille Scenic Byway and scenic integrity objectives assigned to the area. The potential impacts to scenic resources from this project were determined based on local knowledge of the project area in coordination with the interdisciplinary team, review of photos of the project area, use and interpretation of GIS data and aerial imagery, and review of research and analysis of similar projects.

The Forest Plan direction for scenic resources was reviewed to determine the degree of acceptable alteration of the characteristic landscape for this project area. Scenic integrity objectives provide the degree of acceptable alteration of the characteristic landscape and are also a measure of the degree to which a landscape is visually perceived to be complete. Evaluations made in this analysis were based on the scenic integrity objectives (SIO’s) assigned to the project area and used (SIO’s) to determine if the alternatives meet Forest Plan standards and guidelines by comparing the degree of alterations to the existing landscape character.

5.1 Assumptions

- Vegetation treatments reducing the overstory tree component or removing the entire overstory, often create the most noticeable effects for scenery. These treatments can have their greatest effect when viewed in the immediate foreground and foreground distance zones. However, they can also have strong evident effects when viewed in the middleground and background.
- Treatment location, in relation to terrain and elevation and other vegetative screening, can affect the visibility of management activities.
- The duration of view or speed of travel through an area (i.e., walking or riding in a vehicle), determine how long a viewer has to study and pick out objects, forms, lines, colors, and patterns in the landscape.

- How well treatments transition from treated to untreated areas can also affect how evident a treatment is in all distance zones
- Proposed activities, although they may have some short-term negative impacts on scenery, also may begin to move the landscape toward the desired landscape character. Effects that would move the vegetation toward the desired landscape character are beneficial to scenic resources in the long term. These beneficial effects are often realized over a long period of time but lead to the lasting sustainability of valued scenery attributes. For example, tree thinning may have short-term effects of ground disturbance, stumps, and slash, but in the long term, if properly mitigated for scenery, may provide visual access into the forest and promote large tree growth and a smooth herbaceous ground cover. In the long-term, the removal of some trees, dependent on scale and intensity of treatment, may be a beneficial effect for scenery.
- Desired landscape character often includes and is linked to preferred visual settings. Gobster (1994) summarizes visually preferred settings as having four common attributes: large trees; smooth, herbaceous ground cover; an open midstory canopy with high visual penetration; and vistas with distant views and high topographic relief.

5.2 Information Sources

The following USDA handbooks establish a framework for management of scenic resources applicable to this project. The scenery management system (SMS) is the primary framework and the visual management system will be used as a reference and additional guidance, but will not replace SMS guidance in the Forest Plan.

- USDA-Forest Service. 2019. Colville National Forest Land Management Plan. Region 6.
- USDA Forest Service. 1995. Scenery Management System, Landscape Aesthetics, A Handbook for Scenery Management, Handbook 701, Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of Agriculture
- USDA-Forest Service. 2007. Appendix J – Recommended SMS Refinements, Appendix to Landscape Aesthetics, Handbook for Scenery Management, USDA Handbook 701.
- USDA Forest Service. 1982. Landscape Character Types of the National Forests in Oregon and Washington. James W. Pollock, Pacific Northwest Region.
- USDA Forest Service, The Visual Management System, 1974, National Forest Landscape Management Handbooks, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Agriculture:
 - NFLM, Volume 2, Handbook 462
 - NFLM, Volume 2, Chapter 4, Roads, Handbook 483
 - NFLM, Volume 2, Chapter 5, Timber, Handbook 559
 - NFLM, Volume 2, Chapter 5, Fire, Handbook 608

Forest Service Manual 2300 – Forest Service manual direction provides further clarification to utilize the Scenery Management System in forest and project planning and implementation, including section 2382.4, Applications to Project Management;

- Determine how various silvicultural and landscape design treatments can be used to meet scenic integrity objectives and landscape character goals.
- Understand how fire can be a useful tool to achieve desired scenic integrity objectives and landscape character goals.

- Determine how scenery management techniques and principles can be used to mitigate any land altering activity or introduced elements on the land, to achieve and maintain desired scenic integrity objectives and landscape character goals.

5.3 Incomplete and Unavailable Information

Information necessary for evaluating scenery effects is sufficient.

5.4 Spatial and Temporal Context for Effects Analysis

5.4.1 Direct/Indirect/Cumulative Effects Boundaries

The spatial boundary analyzed for direct, indirect and cumulative effects is bounded by the Sweet-Ione Integrated Resources Improvement Project area as seen from the primary scenic travel routes in the project area of Meadow Creek FR 1700 and Smackout Pass FR 1715, and North Pend-Oreille Scenic Byway and the International Selkirk Loop All American Road located to the east outside the project area along the valley bottom. Temporal boundaries are usually short-term in nature or long-term. Short-term effects are impacts from project activities that are expected to last up to 5 to 10 years. Long-term effects are those projected to endure beyond 10 years to a maximum of 20 years. (FSH.1909.15, 15.2a).

The effects to the scenery resources can be short term and long term. Short term is usually less than 5 years, and long term is 5 years to 50 years. Effects that are eliminated by the natural course of a single growing season are not considered effects because they are so short lived. Most vegetation treatments have long term effects while the logging activities such as cable yarding, skidding and slash burning are usually short term effects lasting less than 5 years. The project analysis area is the area from which the proposed treatments can be visibly discerned. The analysis is done within the project boundary. (FSH 1909.15, 152b)

5.5 Intensity Level Definitions

The type, duration, and intensity of impacts to the scenic resources are defined below.

Type of impact:

- Beneficial: vegetation treatment through non-commercial and commercial treatments including shelterwood, thinning and mixed harvest prescriptions, under-burn prescribed fire treatment, aquatic and riparian habitat restoration and road management activities would improve landscape character and scenic integrity/sustainability, management activities are not visually evident, or remain visually subordinate to the characteristic landscape. In landscape areas not highly visible, management activities may dominate the original characteristic landscape.
- Adverse: none with scenic design criteria and mitigation measures

Duration of impact:

- Short term: 5-10 years; scenic design criteria and mitigation are designed to meet scenic integrity objectives in the short term
- Long term: 10+ years; the landscape character would be reflective of a natural appearing to slightly altered appearance with a more sustainable scenic integrity level benefiting scenic quality in the viewsheds. The proposed vegetation and fuels management activities begin the transition of moving the forest setting on a landscape scale towards the sustainable landscape character by reducing fuels, enhancing desired large tree character and restoring historical range of variability, aquatic and riparian habitat restoration and road management activities would improve landscape character

Intensity of impact:

- Negligible: Impacts to scenic quality are not noticed or measurable.
- Minor: Impacts to scenic quality are slightly visible/measurable and are not noticeable the following growing season. The valued landscape character appears intact or unaltered.
- Moderate: Impacts to scenic quality are visible and noticeable to the average forest user, the landscape character is more open with a mosaic landscape character and scenic integrity may have deviations with visible stumps and ground slash showing. The valued landscape character appears slightly altered.
- Major: Impacts to scenic quality are noticeably visible/measurable, landscape character could be very open with evidence of stumps, coarse woody debris (slash) being seen in places and possible linear corridors of roads or skyline corridors opened up in places. The valued landscape character appears moderately altered but activities borrow from the naturally established form, line, color, and texture to the natural surroundings.

6.0 Environmental Consequences

6.1 Alternative 1 – No Action

Resource Indicator and Measure: Does no action taken meet the scenic integrity objectives assigned by the Forest Plan? Measure; Amount of changes seen on the landscape, including changes affected by the shape, size and arrangement and location of commercial and non-commercial vegetation treatment and harvest methods, hazardous fuels treatment and methods, aquatic and riparian habitat restoration methods and road management activities in concern level 2 travel routes, Meadow Creek FR 1700 and Smackout Pass FR 1715.

No action taken would not have short term effects to landscape character, scenic integrity, or scenic stability. Existing landscape character, scenery integrity and scenic stability would remain the same in the short term, the landscape would remain as a mosaic pattern of natural appearing to slightly altered landscape character and scenic condition as it currently exists. The vegetative component of the landscape would continue to grow through the pattern of natural succession with a high risk of future disturbance, primarily wildfire. Forest succession that has resulted from fire suppression shapes forest landscapes, the highly textured tree density patterns would continue to dominate the landscape character where they exist. Scenic quality of landscape character and scenic condition would have very low human intervention with nature taking its course. Disturbance to the existing landscape that would occur through mechanical disturbance related to activities of tree removal and prescribed burning would not occur. The opportunity to enhance scenic quality, improve the forested setting and enhancement of large tree character would not be done. A transitional approach to treating the landscape by moving the landscape character towards a more sustainable forest setting that is more resilient to fire; disease and/or bug infestations would not be done. Consequently, the risk of large-scale disturbance patterns, which are out of their natural disturbance regime, would remain as existing. The indirect long term effects related to the existing conditions and trends could be substantial. The overstocked stands are under greater and greater stress which is likely to lead to insect and disease epidemics. Fuel loads within the stands increase the hazards of stand replacement fire. All of these conditions would continue to degrade the scenic stability. In the event of a stand replacement fire the scenic integrity would likely be greatly reduced by uncharacteristic fire because the firefighting opportunities would be limited due to fuel conditions that effect flame lengths.

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The considerations to the stability of scenery resources in this project area are project stand conditions related to departure from historical fire regimes and tree density levels to determine overstocked conditions. Ninety eight percent of the Sweet-Ione project area is dominated by the FRCC 2 (Moderate), almost the entire landscape area, which is rated moderate to low scenic stability on a landscape scale, moderately divergent from historical conditions. The majority of the project area under current stand conditions has high fuel loadings and densely stocked canopies when compared to historical loadings for the fire regime that it occurs in.

These two factors create a *moderate to low scenic stability* for the project area.

It is only a matter of time before a relatively large stand replacement fire impacts this area and alters the scenery. The Baldy Fire north of Ione is a good indicator of what this area could look like after such an event.

Resource Indicator and Measure: Does the no action taken protect, maintain or enhance the scenery outstandingly remarkable Recreation and scenic values of the International Selkirk Loop and North Pend Oreille Scenic Byway viewshed? Measure: Amount of changes seen on the landscape, including changes affected by the shape, size and arrangement of location of treatment units within International Selkirk Loop and North Pend Oreille Scenic Byway viewshed, ½ mile on each side. The travel corridor is east of the project area travelling south-north through the valley bottom.

There are no treatments proposed in the designated scenic byway corridor, but the middleground would have the same effects as above viewed in various areas from the byway. (See Figure 3. Potential Seen Area Map from Ione).

6.1.1 *Summary of Effects*

No action would not address the vegetation conditions that are the beyond the historic range of variability. All of these conditions would continue to degrade the scenic stability. No action taken would not reduce the risk uncharacteristic wildfire that could cause undue effects to scenery, nor will it move the stands toward the desired condition that contribute to scenic stability and improve or enhance the landscape character.

6.2 Alternative 2 – Proposed Action

Refer to the description of the Proposed Action in the EA.

6.2.1 *Project Design Features and Mitigation Measures for Scenic Resources*

The following objectives are developed to meet Moderate to High Scenic Integrity Objectives for foreground and middleground area as allocated for the Meadow Creek FR 1700 and Smackout Pass FR 1715 and the International Selkirk Loop/North Pend Oreille Scenic Byway viewshed.

Table 5. Design Criteria/Mitigation Measures for Scenery

Number	Design Feature	Objective	Ensures Compliance With The Forest Plan
	<i>Scenic Quality</i>		
SC-1	Maintain high scenic quality settings along the foreground and middleground distance zones of designated scenic travel routes used for year round recreation. Manage the foreground (up to ½ mile distance zone or seen area) to minimize	To meet High to Moderate Scenic Integrity Objectives (SIO's) and scenery management. Retains natural form, line, color, texture, and pattern on the	FW-DC-SCE-01 FW-STD-SCE-01 FW-GDL-SCE-01 FW-GDL-SCE-03 FW-GDL-SCE-05 MA-DC-SB-01

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Number	Design Feature	Objective	Ensures Compliance With The Forest Plan
	visual impact of vegetation and fuels reduction activities and provide a roaded natural experience. Scenic Integrity Objectives (SIO's) for Moderate or High. Repeating form, line, color, texture, pattern, and scale common to the valued landscape character being viewed is the most effective way to maintain scenic integrity in the High and Moderate Scenic integrity Objective Levels	landscape Applies to: Meadow Creek FR 1700: High to Moderate SIO Smackout Pass FR 1715: High to Moderate SIO International Selkirk Loop-North Pend Oreille Scenic Byway viewshed: High SIO	SIO's of management areas: General Restoration Focused Restoration Scenic Byways Concern level 1 and 2 travel routes; Forest Plan Appendix D
SC-2	Enhance landscape character by increasing vegetation variety by promoting different age classes of tree species, and thinning to expose large Ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir boles and fall colors of western larch stands for viewing along the travel routes. Leave clumps of varying sizes of overstory and understory along the foreground of travel routes and trailside zones. Use irregular clumping and feathering of unit edges to avoid introducing lines that could result from unit edges	To meet High to Moderate Scenic Integrity Objectives and scenery management. Retains natural form, line, color, texture, and pattern on the landscape Applies to: Meadow Creek FR 1700: High to Moderate SIO Smackout Pass FR 1715: High to Moderate SIO	FW-DC-SCE-01 FW-STD-SCE-01 FW-GDL-SCE-01 FW-GDL-SCE-03 FW-GDL-SCE-05 SIO's of management areas: General Restoration Focused Restoration Concern level 1 and 2 travel routes; Forest Plan Appendix D
SC-3	In areas with Moderate or High SIO's prescribed, cut stumps of all size classes low as feasible unless otherwise unattainable due to environmental or safety concerns. *In Summer logging operations, cut stumps less than 8 inches on the high side of the stump within 100 feet of scenic travel routes. *In Winter logging operations, cut as low as possible, minimum 12" height	To minimize viewing of stumps along scenic landscape travel routes in the immediate foreground. Applies to: Meadow Creek FR 1700: High to Moderate SIO Smackout Pass FR 1715: High to Moderate SIO	FW-DC-SCE-01 FW-STD-SCE-01 FW-GDL-SCE-01 FW-GDL-SCE-03 FW-GDL-SCE-05 SIO's of management areas: General Restoration Focused Restoration Concern level 1 and 2 travel routes; Forest Plan Appendix D
SC-4	Landings location and slash treatment: Minimize visual effects of landings and slash debris once the project is complete. Where feasible, slash piles and log landings would not be located within the immediate foreground (300') or seen area as viewed from scenic travel corridors and system trails. Where possible, leave vegetative screening between landings and slash burn piles and FG zones of travel routes. If vegetative clearing is needed, shape edges of landings to mimic natural patterns	To meet High to Moderate Scenic Integrity Objectives and scenery management. Retains natural form, line, color, texture, and pattern on the landscape Applies to: Meadow Creek FR 1700: High to Moderate SIO Smackout Pass FR 1715: High to Moderate SIO	FW-DC-SCE-01 FW-STD-SCE-01 FW-GDL-SCE-01 FW-GDL-SCE-03 FW-GDL-SCE-05 SIO's of management areas: General Restoration Focused Restoration Concern level 1 and 2 travel routes; Forest

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Number	Design Feature	Objective	Ensures Compliance With The Forest Plan
	and openings. Clear slash and debris in landings and revegetate with native species. Landings and skid trails: Reclaim and rehabilitate impacted portions of these areas to facilitate rapid recovery and prevent future visible erosion and non-native invasive plant infestation.		Plan Appendix D
SC-5	Evidence of activities which are temporary in nature (such as staking, paint, flagging, equipment maintenance, and/or staging areas) should occur at the minimum level needed and should be removed or cleaned up immediately following project completion. Develop marking guidelines to minimize the amount of paint seen from areas of scenic concern. Paint using ITM so paint will be removed with tree when harvested in commercial thin units.	To meet High to Moderate Scenic Integrity Objectives and scenery management. Retains natural form, line, color, texture, and pattern on the landscape Applies to: Meadow Creek FR 1700: High to Moderate SIO Smackout Pass FR 1715: High to Moderate SIO	FW-DC-SCE-01 FW-STD-SCE-01 FW-GDL-SCE-01 FW-GDL-SCE-03 FW-GDL-SCE-05 SIO's of management areas: General Restoration Focused Restoration Concern level 1 and 2 travel routes; Forest Plan Appendix D
SC6	Management practices which create openings should: - Retain reserve islands and clumps in openings that may exceed 5 acres; - Retain single trees in the immediate foreground to frame views; - Retain single trees along the edge of the opening where existing vegetation provides a backdrop; - Highlight character trees such as large diameter trees, - Feather heights of clearing edges; leave full-crowned trees. -Shape temporary and permanent openings to have a natural appearing configuration. -Use irregular clumping and feathering of unit edges to avoid introducing dominating lines that could result from creating openings. In areas designated to Low Scenic Integrity Objectives, strive to maintain a combination of mosaic and uniform (open) spaces and retain color and texture in the landscape.	To meet High to Moderate Scenic Integrity Objectives and scenery management. Retains natural form, line, color, texture, and pattern on the landscape Applies to: Meadow Creek FR 1700: High to Moderate SIO Smackout Pass FR 1715: High to Moderate SIO In areas designated to Low Scenic Integrity Objectives, strive to maintain a combination of mosaic and uniform (open) spaces and retain color and texture in the landscape.	FW-DC-SCE-01 FW-STD-SCE-01 FW-GDL-SCE-01 FW-GDL-SCE-03 FW-GDL-SCE-05 SIO's of management areas: General Restoration Focused Restoration Concern level 1 and 2 travel routes; Forest Plan Appendix D.
SC-8	Methods used to control prescribed burns should not dominate the naturally established form, line, color and texture of the landscape area in scenic viewsheds.	To meet High to Moderate Scenic Integrity Objectives and scenery management. Retains natural form, line,	FW-DC-SCE-01 FW-STD-SCE-01 FW-GDL-SCE-01

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Number	Design Feature	Objective	Ensures Compliance With The Forest Plan
	Minimize dozer lines and do complete rehabilitation when done, utilize natural features and existing roads as breaks. Locate furrows, trenches and handlines to reduce linear appearance as viewed from recreation use areas.	color, texture, and pattern on the landscape Applies to: Meadow Creek FR 1700: High to Moderate SIO Smackout Pass FR 1715: High to Moderate SIO	FW-GDL-SCE-03 FW-GDL-SCE-05 SIO's of management areas: General Restoration Focused Restoration Concern level 1 and 2 travel routes; Forest Plan Appendix D.
SC-9	In seen areas, snags and cavity trees should be grouped with reserve islands. If single trees are reserved, they should be within 200 feet of the edge of existing vegetation. Single trees in the immediate foreground generally should be greater than 10 inches dbh	To meet High to Moderate Scenic Integrity Objectives and scenery management. Retains natural form, line, color, texture, and pattern on the landscape Applies to: Meadow Creek FR 1700: High to Moderate SIO Smackout Pass FR 1715: High to Moderate SIO	FW-DC-SCE-01 FW-STD-SCE-01 FW-GDL-SCE-01 FW-GDL-SCE-03 FW-GDL-SCE-05 SIO's of management areas: General Restoration Focused Restoration Concern level 1 and 2 travel routes; Forest Plan Appendix D.
SC-10	For obliterations of temporary roads: - Use positive signing and/or natural appearing barriers such as rocks, logs, or berms to effectively block roadway and allow revegetation. If signing is used, remove once evidence of road is no longer present. - Round slopes to approximate original contour. - Scarify roadbed to ensure natural revegetation is established in 2 years and seed with native grass seed mix. - Allow for natural revegetation (insure natural revegetation is established within 10 years).	To meet High to Moderate Scenic Integrity Objectives and scenery management. Retains natural form, line, color, texture, and pattern on the landscape Applies to: Meadow Creek FR 1700: High to Moderate SIO Smackout Pass FR 1715: High to Moderate SIO	FW-DC-SCE-01 FW-STD-SCE-01 FW-GDL-SCE-01 FW-GDL-SCE-03 FW-GDL-SCE-05 SIO's of management areas: General Restoration Focused Restoration Concern level 1 and 2 travel routes; Forest Plan Appendix D.

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Number	Design Feature	Objective	Ensures Compliance With The Forest Plan
SC-11	<p>Treatment of activity fuels and slash treatment along the FG of roads and systems trails:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -No activity fuels will be allowed to remain on or within the roadway or system trailside zone -The amount and location of residual slash within vegetation harvest units should strive to minimize potential impacts to road and system trailside zones -Additional slash mitigation such as piling or pulling back the slash will be required where residual slash exceeds 6 inches in depth over an area greater than 100 square feet if it is located within 100 feet of road and system trails. 	<p>To meet High to Moderate Scenic Integrity Objectives and scenery management. Retains natural form, line, color, texture, and pattern on the landscape</p> <p>Applies to:</p> <p>Meadow Creek FR 1700: High to Moderate SIO</p> <p>Smackout Pass FR 1715: High to Moderate SIO</p>	<p>FW-DC-SCE-01 FW-STD-SCE-01 FW-GDL-SCE-01 FW-GDL-SCE-03 FW-GDL-SCE-05</p> <p>SIO's of management areas:</p> <p>General Restoration</p> <p>Focused Restoration</p> <p>Concern level 1 and 2 travel routes; Forest Plan Appendix D.</p>
SC-12	<p>For opening roads and constructing new or temporary roads:</p> <p>Leave large trees and clumps of vegetation below the road prism on downhill side to provide vegetative screening as viewed from a distance.</p>	<p>To meet High to Moderate Scenic Integrity Objectives and scenery management. Retains natural form, line, color, texture, and pattern on the landscape</p> <p>Applies to:</p> <p>Meadow Creek FR 1700: High to Moderate SIO</p> <p>Smackout Pass FR 1715: High to Moderate SIO</p>	<p>FW-DC-SCE-01 FW-STD-SCE-01 FW-GDL-SCE-01 FW-GDL-SCE-03 FW-GDL-SCE-05</p> <p>SIO's of management areas:</p> <p>General Restoration</p> <p>Focused Restoration</p> <p>Concern level 1 and 2 travel routes; Forest Plan Appendix D.</p>

6.2.2 *Direct and Indirect Effects - Alternative 2*

This alternative is fully defined in Chapter 2 of the EA.

Alternative 2 treats approximately 8, 430 acres of vegetation within the project area with a variety of methods including commercial harvest treatments of shelterwood, thinning and mixed harvest, followed with non-commercial treatments to reduce hazardous fuels including machine or hand piled log slash burn piles and prescribed burns both within and outside the project area. The majority of commercial treatments are ground based with only unit 53 currently being proposed for skyline logging. In addition, road management activities are proposed to access treatment units, provide access for future management actions, and improve watershed conditions with activities for instream habitats and wetlands. The overall treatment objectives for the proposed action is to meet the purpose and need by providing for firefighter safety and reducing the potential for undesirable effects due to wildfire in areas identified in the Pond Oreille County Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP).

For purposes of analysis, the following criteria are developed to rate the consequences of the alternatives from high landscape character and scenic condition to moderate landscape character and scenic condition to low landscape character and scenic condition.

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Table 6. Description of the general visual appearance of High, Moderate and Low SIO

Landscape Character/Scenic Condition	Visual Description
HIGH Landscape Character and Scenic Condition (Desired for all visually sensitive foreground and middleground areas) High Scenic Integrity Objective (SIO)	Mosaic landscape patterns, less uniformity. High diversity of structures and variety of spaces. Light treatment to the landscape. Minimal skyline corridors, visible roads, and little mechanical disturbances. Alterations emulate natural appearing patterns. Open spaces with variety of patterns. Areas of dense, mosaic, and clumpy arrangement of textural patterns. Interesting landscapes. Appears Unaltered.
MODERATE Landscape Character and Scenic Condition (Desired in foreground and middleground areas) Moderate Scenic Integrity Objective (SIO)	Combination of mosaic and uniform landscape patterns. Some diversity of structure. Moderate variety of spaces and treatment to the landscape. A variety of natural to slightly altered scenic conditions. A variation of natural pattern and interest in the landscape. Some textural patterns and mosaic landscape character are retained. Appears Slightly Altered.
LOW Landscape Character and Scenic Condition (Preferred in other landscapes) Low Scenic Integrity Objective (SIO)	Combination of some mosaic and more uniform landscape patterns. Some diversity of structure. Some variety of spaces. Moderate to higher treatment to the landscape. A variety of natural to slightly altered to altered conditions. A variation of natural pattern and interest in the landscape. Some textural patterns are retained. Appears Moderately Altered.
VERY LOW Landscape Character and Scenic Condition (Not desirable in any landscape) Maximum Modification Scenic Integrity Objective (SIO)	Uniform landscape patterns. Low diversity of structures, little variety of spaces, sameness. Heavy treatment to the landscape. Roads, skyline corridors, and mechanical disturbances dominate scenic conditions. Alterations do not appear natural, heavily altered conditions. Natural patterns are destroyed. Uninteresting, barren and sparse landscapes. Appears Heavily Altered.

Resource Indicator and Measure: Does the alternative meet the scenic integrity objectives assigned by the Forest Plan? Measure; Amount of changes seen on the landscape, including changes affected by the shape, size and arrangement and location of commercial and non-commercial vegetation treatment and harvest methods, hazardous fuels treatment and methods, aquatic and riparian habitat restoration methods and road management activities in concern level 2 travel routes, Meadow Creek FR 1700 and Smackout Pass FR 1715.

Overall, Alternative 2 would meet High to Moderate Scenic Integrity Objectives for the concern level 2 travel routes Meadow Creek FR 1700 and Smackout Pass FR 1715, with the exception of one area along Smackout Pass Road where Low SIO would be met in areas that are allocated to Moderate or High. This part of the travel route would have shelterwood treatment openings done for approximately 1 mile along the west side of the FG. In landscape areas where an ecosystem is out of the historical range of variability the forest setting may exist at a lower scenic integrity during treatment activity and recovery in order to restore and sustain the landscape character to the assigned Scenic Integrity Objective (SIO). On a landscape scale, the proposed commercial and non-commercial vegetation treatment and harvest methods, hazardous fuels treatment and methods, aquatic and riparian habitat restoration methods and road management activities would improve scenic stability rating from a “Moderate” to “Low” scenic stability to a “High” and “Very High” Scenic Stability level. (See Existing Scenic Stability section 1.4). Both classifications have scenery attribute conditions that are within the range of natural or historic variability.

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The proposed action would increase visibility into stands along the travel routes Meadow Creek FR 1700 and Smackout Pass FR 1715 by removing trees in foreground distance zone through commercial thinning, mixed treatment, or shelterwood harvest prescriptions, enhancing large tree character, opening up the mid-canopy, and creating greater foreground diversity.

The commercial thinning and mixed treatments would favor leaving pine and larch species that have the desired large tree character and fire resiliency and the mixed treatment prescriptions would add mosaic character. This would improve the scenic character and the scenic stability of the area. Removal of smaller trees opens view into stands and removal of hazard trees or dead and dying trees would enhance scenery by highlighting the healthy green stands. Shelterwood prescriptions create a more open landscape character, the ground is visually dominating with large scattered overstory trees located in a wide spatial pattern that appears altered (Low SIO) in the short and long term until the understory becomes established. In areas where the trees are not healthy removing them would be positive for scenic integrity in the long term, but in the short term a noticeable impact.

Other direct effects to scenery include views of stumps and slash and ground disturbance in foreground areas, evidence of fuels under burning in areas and pile burning around the west side of Smackout Pass Road intersection with Meadow Creek Road for approximately one mile. A growing season would reduce the effects to the remaining scorched tree trunks and dead saplings resulting from under burning. Fire, at low intensity is a natural occurrence in this area, and its effects do not degrade the scenic quality. This treatment can greatly improve a stands resiliency to large stand replacement fire, which can affect the scenic quality. On the landscape scale, by using prescribed fire in a timely manner and in phased treatments, it is expected to reduce the future risk of a potential high intensity wildfire that would affect scenic quality. Prescribed fire has the potential to create larger forms (openings) in the landscape than intended, possibly burn out of the area intended, and/or to burn trees that are desired to be retained for scenic quality or other resource objectives. The benefits of reducing fuels in the project area are complimentary for sustaining scenic quality. Utilizing existing landings, roads, fire lines and natural fuel breaks as proposed would reduce further visual impacts associated with implementation. In these areas, visual impacts are contained in areas already impacted rather than introducing new impacts.

Coarse woody debris (slash) would be seen along the travel routes before under burning, hand or machine piling, and pile burning. This would create a short-term negative visual effect until the material is burned, decomposes or is softened by early successional grasses and forbs. The proposed under burning and pile burning may not entirely reduce the slash.

Logging systems would primarily be ground based logging operations with one skyline unit. Skyline corridors have the potential to introduce lines in the viewshed, feathering edges by leaving clumps and aligning the cable corridors to blend in the landscape would be done. The ground-based logging system would create visible effects for the first year including ground disturbance, slash and debris, but after a growing cycle these effects would be negligible.

These treatments would improve scenic stability from low to moderately high where “all dominant scenery attributes of the valued scenic character are present and are likely to be sustained” (pg 19, App. J) and would improve the scenic character by moving stands toward the historic range of variability. More open stands of relatively fire resistant species compositions will improve scenic stability. See the previous section in the proposed action narrative on the summary of general effects for discussion of positive and negative effects for landscape character and scenic integrity.

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Table 7. Proposed Silvicultural Treatments and Acres by Viewshed (Foreground Distance Zone)

Proposed Silvicultural Treatment and Acres (Total 8,430 acres) 5,620 Acres (General Restoration) 2,810 Acres (Focused Restoration) 0 Acres (Backcountry) 0 Acres (Scenic Byways)	Approximate Acres in Meadow Creek FR 1700 Foreground distance zone (1/2 mile)	Approximate Acres in Smackout Pass FR 1715 Foreground distance zone (1/2 mile)	Approximate Acres International Selkirk Loop and North Pend Oreille Scenic Byway viewshed * (No Treatment Proposed In Travel Corridor)
Commercial Thin, pile burning Total 1,731 Acres	High SIO 147 Acres	High SIO 106 Acres	High SIO 0 Acres
	Moderate SIO 146 Acres	Moderate SIO 123 Acres	
	Low SIO 11 Acres	Low SIO 19 Acres	
Commercial Thin, Underburn Total 1,853 Acres	High SIO 95 Acres	High SIO 88 Acres	High SIO 0 Acres
	Moderate SIO 40 Acres	Moderate SIO 129 Acres	
	Low SIO 6 Acres	Low SIO 29 Acres	
Shelterwood, Pile Burning Total 1,520 Acres	High SIO 46 Acres	High SIO 32 Acres	High SIO 0 Acres
	Moderate SIO 47 Acres	Moderate SIO 45 Acres	
	Low SIO 13 Acres	Low SIO 41 Acres	
Mixed Treatment, Pile Burning Total 2,463 Acres	High SIO 399 Acres	High SIO 190 Acres	High SIO 0 Acres
	Moderate SIO 285 Acres	Moderate SIO 12 Acres	
	Low SIO 173 Acres	Low SIO 31 Acres	
Mixed Treatment, Underburn Total 451 Acres	High SIO 24 Acres	High SIO 0 Acres	High SIO 0 Acres
	Moderate SIO 25 Acres	Moderate SIO 0 Acres	
	Low SIO 5 Acres	Low SIO 3 Acres	
Mixed Treatment, Pile Burning/Underburn Total 412 Acres	High SIO 57 Acres	High SIO 0 Acres	High SIO 0 Acres
	Moderate SIO 284 Acres	Moderate SIO 0 Acres	
	Low SIO 28 Acres	Low SIO 0 Acres	

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Resource Indicator and Measure: Does the alternative protect, maintain or enhance the scenery outstandingly remarkable Recreation and scenic values of the International Selkirk Loop and North Pend Oreille Scenic Byway viewshed? Measure; Amount of changes seen on the landscape, including changes affected by the shape, size and arrangement of location of treatment units within International Selkirk Loop and North Pend Oreille Scenic Byway viewshed, ½ mile on each side. The travel corridor is east of the project area travelling south-north through the valley bottom.

Overall, Alternative 2 would meet High to Moderate Scenic Integrity Objectives viewed from the scenic byway. Most of the project area is located out of the scenic byway, with primarily commercial thinning proposed in the landscape closest to the scenic byway travel corridor. The proposed seed tree regeneration units are not seen from International Selkirk Loop and North Pend Oreille Scenic Byway.

6.3 Cumulative Effects – Alternative 2

6.3.1 Past, Present, and Reasonably Foreseeable Activities Relevant to Cumulative Effects Analysis

No cumulative effects to scenic resources are expected in the long term. There are no irreversible or irretrievable commitments related to scenic resources from this alternative.

7.0 Summary

7.1 Degree to Which the Purpose and Need for Action is Met

The Sweet-Ione Integrated Resources Improvement project area would meet High to Moderate Scenic Integrity Objectives for the concern level 2 travel routes Meadow Creek FR 1700 and Smackout Pass FR 1715, with the exception of one area along Smackout Pass Road where Low SIO would be met in areas that are allocated to Moderate or High. This part of the travel route would have shelterwood treatment openings done for approximately 1 mile along the west side of the FG. The High to Moderate Scenic Integrity Objectives viewed from the scenic byway would be maintained. Most of the project area is located out of the scenic byway, with primarily commercial thinning proposed in the landscape closest to the scenic byway travel corridor. The proposed seed tree regeneration units are not seen from International Selkirk Loop and North Pend Oreille Scenic Byway International Selkirk Loop and North Pend Oreille Scenic Byway.

7.2 Compliance with LRMP and Other Relevant Laws, Regulations, Policies and Plans

Alternative 2 would be consistent with Forest Plan goals, standards, and guidelines for scenery management and has been designed to meet the High to Moderate to Low Scenic Integrity Objectives (SIO's) assigned to the project area by the Colville National Land Management Forest Plan in the short term and long term.

The proposed action alternative would maintain the existing range of Moderate to High Landscape Character and Scenic Integrity (Condition) and would meet the established Scenic Integrity Objectives of High to Moderate. In High SIO to Moderate SIO areas (primarily commercial thinning, mixed treatment, shelterwood harvest and pile burns or prescribed burns) landscape character changes would be seen as thinned stands of trees and a more open forested canopy character. In Low SIO areas (primarily seed tree prescriptions) the proposed action would improve species composition, stand density, and reduce ladder fuels and canopy closure but the landscape would appear much more open as a result of most of the trees being removed. In Moderate SIO areas the visitor would perceive a natural appearing to slightly altered landscape viewed in foreground or middleground and would have moderate scenic integrity. In High SIO

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areas the visitor would perceive a natural appearing landscape viewed in foreground and middleground and would have high scenic integrity. The proposed seed tree regeneration units are not seen from International Selkirk Loop and North Pend Oreille Scenic Byway and would meet the Low SIO.

8.0 References Cited

Scenic References

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